

**2020-32: Beatty vs Kamloops This Week**

June 10 2020

The National NewsMedia Council has mediated and dismissed a complaint about irresponsible reporting on a sensitive issue in a May 7 2020 article in Kamloops This Week.

Complainant Marvin Beatty said the sentence "Between January 2018 and June 2019, (a person) was the subject of five police missing persons press releases and was found safe each time" was irrelevant. He stated that the subject was an Indigenous person and for that reason it was 'insensitive' or 'opinion' to report the number of times the person had been missing.

Kamloops This Week responded by stating the brief article was based on a police press release. It noted that dozens of such information releases are issued by police every year, and that many involve young people who run away from homes or foster homes for brief periods.

The news media organization said it reports on all missing persons, from toddlers to adults with ties to crime, "because they are all important" and adds information about relevant circumstances. As well, the news organization said it has written stories about police frustrations with the volume of missing persons calls about youth, and about the search for better solutions to the problem.

The NewsMedia Council upholds the journalistic practice of providing context for news and information. It is the job of journalism not just to report facts, but to report in a manner that allows the reader to form an understanding of how those facts relate to other factors or events.

In that light, the news organization's explanation that "They are not abductions. They are not even out-of-the-ordinary actions specific to the subjects" is consistent with the inclusion of relevant additional information.

The NewsMedia Council is of the view that journalism's job includes assessing information, including police news releases. The newsroom has the editorial responsibility to provide facts and context that will allow the reader to consider such things as risk of danger, or opportunity to help find a missing person. In this case, the NewsMedia Council accepts that the newsroom's knowledge of its community and familiarity with circumstances allows it to provide appropriate contextual information as warranted.

It is noted that the news organization did not make reference to racial identity as a basis for characterizing missing persons.

The NewsMedia Council is of the view that the information added to the police information release is consistent with journalistic prerogative to add context; is newsworthy information for the public; and is not indicative of discrimination against an identifiable population. Further, the news media organization demonstrated commendable practice in writing separate articles on the issue of missing youth.

For the above reasons, the NewsMedia Council finds no breach of journalistic standards and dismisses the complaint.